

Flipped Over

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Summary: Zane is dealing with being a merman, Cleo and Lewis are dealing with their engagement, Bella and Will are trying to figure things out, and Rikki is trying to find an apartment for Zane and her. What happens when a new, mysterious, blue stone appears? Sequel to Flip Flopped. Possible lemons later on.

1. Rebuilding things

The sun rose over the Australian coast just like it did every day, but today it rose over a greatly changed group of people. The six teenagers awoke and opened their eyes at different times throughout the hours of the morning.

Cleo's eyes opened first. They immediately focused on the sparkling diamond ring that was fitted tightly on the fourth finger of her left hand. She couldn't keep from smiling as she remembered Lewis's proposal.

Suddenly it hit her like a ton of bricks. She and Lewis were getting married. She was soon going to be Cleo McArtney. Cleo took a deep breath of excitement. There was so much to do, so much to plan, so much to-

Cleo stopped in her tracks, her heart beating fast. There was one thing she needed to do before anything else, and it kind of petrified her.

She needed to tell her Dad.

Zane was the next to awaken, of the six. The first thing he did was reach his arm for Rikki on the other side of the bed. It took a few seconds for him to remember that she was not there anymore. She was at her own home, along with everyone else. The house seemed oddly quiet at Zane laid there. He stood up out of the bed, a little reluctantly, and headed down the steps to the kitchen.

Zane was surprised to see his father already sitting at the kitchen

table, already dressed and reading a newspaper.

"You're up awfully early," Harrison Bennett observed, glancing up from his paper for just a second.

"Yeah." Zane's bland tone matched his father's. He walked to stand in front of of Harrison's chair and waited patiently for him to look up.

After several seconds, Harrison realized that Zane had something to say. He looked up with disinterest. "What is it?" He asked.

"I'm moving out." Zane said matter-of-factly.

That got Harrison's attention pretty fast. "What?" He said angrily.

"And I'm moving in with Rikki." Zane continued. "We're going to get an apartment together."

"I'm not paying for that." Harrison said coolly.

"And I'm not asking you to." Zane said firmly. "Dad, I'm nineteen years old. I have a job, and a girl I'm in love with. This is happening."

With that, Zane picked up his jacket and walked out the door, proud of himself for talking to his dad. Of course, Zane left out the fact that Rikki was a mermaid and that he was now a merman.

Wow, he was a merman. It would definitely take a while before Zane got used to that idea. He hoped to be able to swim with Rikki sometime that day. This was all so exciting.

Bella's eyes flew open. She quickly sat up in her bed and threw off the covers. Without even stopping to change out of her pajamas, she raced out her front door and outside onto the dock. Without hesitation, she dove straight into the water. Her heart beat fast for a few seconds as she waited for the change into a mermaid to come.

A wave of complete relief swept over her as her legs joined together to form one long, golden fin. Bella's smile was almost too big for her face as she swam quickly through the water. She didn't know where exactly she was headed and she didn't care. She was just excited to be able to swim in the water again, as a mermaid.

Carefully, Bella surfaced, looking around to be sure that there were no boats nearby. She looked around guiltily, realizing that she should have checked for boats before she dove into the water. Luckily for her, the water was clear. The last boat had finally given upon the mermaid hunt that had taken the city by storm.

Bella grinned as she dove back down into the water. She never wanted to climb out again.

Rikki stretched her arms over her head as she stood up out of her bed. She missed Zane's big, comfortable bed, Well, really she just missed Zane. She couldn't wait to talk to him. She wanted to see how he was handling things, and she desperately hoped he hadn't started freaking out yet.

Rikki eagerly reached for her phone and dialed Zane's number. Zane answered before the first ring had even ended.

"I've been waiting for you to finally wake up." Zane's voice teased from the other end of the line.

Rikki calmed at the sound of Zane's voice. She smiled brightly.
"Sorry, you know I'm not too much of a morning person."

"So..." Zane started casually. "What do you want to do today?"

"I don't care, as long as I get to spend the day with you." Rikki said honestly.

Zane smiled before speaking again. "Can I interest you in a swim?"

Rikki was surprised. She hadn't expected Zane to be so enthusiastic about his situation.

"Uh, sure." She said nervously. "I mean, do you really want to?"

"Actually, yeah." Zane admitted. "Do you want to?"

"Of course I do." Rikki said, relieved. "Meet you at the dock outside your place in fifteen minutes?"

"Sooner is better." Zane said through a grin before clicking his phone shut.

Will's eyes opened slowly as he took in the familiar sight of his boat shed. He blinked a few times as his eyes adjusted to the bright sunlight that was streaming into his room.

He took a few seconds to think about the events of the last few days. For whatever reason, it seemed like things were going to work out for him. Bella had given him a second chance.

Will's eyes narrowed as he thought. He couldn't believe that Bella was willing to let him try again. She knew that he had feelings for Rikki. In fact, Bella had been changed forever because of the love he had felt for Rikki. She now had the power to heat water, instead of her usual power to turn water into a jelly-like substance.

Will felt intense guilt when he thought about his behavior over the past week. He was trying to get past it, but it was hard. Everyone else seemed happy, seemed to be moving on, but he was having a hard time with it all. It felt like he had gotten off too easily.

Will stumbled his way into the bathroom and turned on the water in the shower. He stood there, watching the streaming water for several seconds. Slowly, though almost hopefully, he reached a hand out and let the water run over his skin.

Nothing happened. Will shook the water off of his hand, chastising himself. What did he really expect to happen? He knew that the powers had transferred back to Bella. Still, he was kind of disappointed to be a regular human again.

Will showered quickly before heading downstairs. He pulled out his phone to call Bella. No answer. Will tucked the phone into his pocket in disappointment. He wanted to be a good boyfriend to Bella, he wanted to fix things. He may not be in love with her, but he was so very attracted to her. More than anything, he wanted to get back to a point where they could be comfortable with each other.

Also, though Will would be hard-pressed to admit it, he missed swimming in the water with his fin. It had felt so good to be able to power himself through the water that way.

Will shook his head, forcing himself to focus on the present. He tried to call Bella again, but, again, received no answer. Will said, impatiently, in his kitchen, waiting for his phone to ring.

Lewis was sprawled across his bed on his back, snoring loudly. The relief of being back to normal combined with the stress of asking Cleo to marry him had completely worn him out. His cheeks rippled as his inhaled and exhaled, completely dead to the world. His phone rang several times before he managed to make himself awaken enough to answer it.

"Hello?" He muttered, his voice garbled with sleep. He quickly shook himself out of the dream he had been having. "Cleo!" He said happily. "Come over?"

"No, Lewis, I can't come over right now," Cleo said as smoothly as she could manage. "I'm getting ready to tell Dad about our engagement. I thought you might want to be here when I break the news."

Lewis's eyes popped open. "Um..." He stalled. "Don't you think that had better be a father/daughter talk? You know, just the two of you?"

"Lewis," Cleo began, "I really think we should do this together."

Lewis abandoned all thoughts of bravery. "Cleo, I'm nervous about telling him." He admitted.

"So am I." Cleo's tone matched Lewis's. "But can we please tell him together?"

"Of course we can." Lewis would never let Cleo down if he could help it at all.

"Great." The relief in Cleo's voice was obvious, even over the phone.

"I can be there in, say," Lewis checked his watch. "Thirty minutes?"

"Sounds good to me." Cleo took a deep breath. "I'll see you here soon?"

"Absolutely." Lewis said with a smile. He would do anything for Cleo, he just hoped she knew that.

Lewis headed on his way to Cleo's. Rikki headed on her way towards Zane's. Bella swam, free, out in the ocean, and Will waited worriedly in his boat shed. Of the six, some were happy, some were worried, some were excited, but all were glad that the adventure of the last week was over.

Lewis made it to Cleo's house in record time.

"Are you ready for this?" He asked quietly as they stood outside Cleo's front door.

"Yes." Cleo said firmly.

"How do you think he'll take it?" Lewis asked, looking straight forward.

"Pretty bad." Cleo admitted. "But Sam will take it better, and she will help calm him down."

"Ok." Lewis nodded. "Are you ready for this?"

"I've been ready for months." Cleo looked solidly up at the boy she loved. "Let's do this."

The pair walked into the house, side by side.

2. Exploring things

Cleo and Lewis stepped through the front door of Cleo's house, hand in hand. They both froze momentarily as the door shut behind them.

"Are you sure you're ready to tell him?" Lewis asked, his eyes focused vaguely off in the distance.

"Yes." Cleo answered confidently.

"Ok."

A few seconds passed, but neither Cleo nor Lewis stepped any further into the house. Each of them looked straight ahead, willing their feet to move.

"So, do you want to tell him or should I?" Lewis asked quietly.

"You do it." Cleo sounded relieved. "You asked me to marry you, you should tell dad, right?"

"Ok." Lewis hadn't expected Cleo to take him up on the offer. He took a deep breath and prayed Don wouldn't shoot him.

"So... I guess we should go find dad." Cleo's tone was not as strong as it had been a moment ago.

"Right." Lewis said firmly.

Still, neither of them moved.

Don Sertori chose that moment to walk out of the kitchen. He stopped

in his tracks, confused, when he saw Cleo and Lewis standing frozen by the front door. He gave them an odd look as he slowly walked to stand in front of the pair.

"And what are you two up to?" He asked suspiciously. Don crossed his arms over his chest and waited for Cleo and Lewis to answer him.

The couple looked up at Don with wide eyes. This was it. The tension in the room was thick.

"I can tell something's going on." Don's eyes narrowed. "What is it?"

"Lewis and I are getting married." Cleo blurted out. She immediately clapped her hand over her mouth.

Lewis's eyes looked ready to pop out of his head, but he held as still as possible, waiting for Don's reaction.

Don appeared to be frozen solid. And entire minute passed before he managed to speak. "What?"

Lewis cleared his throat before speaking. "Ah, Mr. Sertori, I've asked Cleo to marry me... and she's said yes." Lewis took a small step backwards, away from Don.

Don looked at Cleo. Then he looked at Lewis. Quickly, he reached one arm out, grabbed Lewis by the collar, and pulled him in for a tight bear hug.

"It's about time!" Don clapped Lewis on the back so hard that Lewis's knees buckled.

Cleo's eyes widened excitedly. "You're alright with this?"

"Alright?" Don released a very purple and gasping-for-breath Lewis. "I was wondering when this one was going to man up and ask you!"

Lewis managed a half grin as he tried to catch his breath.

"In all seriousness," Don calmed down for just a second. "I'm thrilled to see Cleo so happy. You two will be great together. Though..." Don looked serious for just a second, "You might have asked me first." Don's expression once again became ecstatic.

Lewis's expression warmed. He, Cleo, and Don joined together in a totally cheesy group hug. After a few seconds of self indulgence they immediately began making plans for an engagement party.

Bella pulled herself out of the water reluctantly. She didn't want to end her day of swimming, but she had a performance with the band to get ready for.

"There you are." Will jogged over to the dock where Bella sat, drying herself off. He watched as she held her hand over her tail and quickly steamed the water away. It was still weird to see her with the same power that Rikki had. "I've been looking for you

everywhere."

Bella stood, smoothing down the blue dress she had on. "I've been out. You know..." Bella looked out over the water. "Out there."

Will slid his hands into his pockets as he gave Bella an easy smile. "Feel good to be back?"

"You have no idea." Bella brightened as a smile crossed her face.

"Glad to hear it." Will reached for Bella. He tried to pull her in for a kiss, but she ducked her head at the last minute and hugged him.

"Let's just take things slow, alright?" She murmured into his arm.

"Ok." Will awkwardly let his arms fall to his sides. "Do you, ah, want to get a juice?"

"I would," Bella answered regretfully. "But I have a performance with the band to prep for."

"Ah." Will nodded. "Where are you guys performing tonight?"

"A wedding." Bella spoke easily to Will as they walked. "It'll be simple, though. We only have to perform for two hours during the reception, the rest of the time there is our own." Bella slid her eyes sideways towards Will. "Want to be my date?"

"I'd love to." Will shyly reached for Bella's hand. She allowed him to entwine his fingers in hers. Bella blushed as he squeezed her hand gently. "What time is the show?"

"Seven to nine." Bella answered. "But the reception starts at 6:30."

"So I'll pick you up at 6:15?" Will's thumb rubbed the back of Bella's hand slowly.

"Sounds good." Bella looked up at his familiar face and smiled. "I'll see you later?"

By this time they'd reached Nate's house, where the band was rehearsing that day. With one last look back at Will, Bella hurried to the side door into Nate's house and let herself in. Will watched her walk away until she was completely out of sight. After the door closed behind her he turned to go, letting out a long sigh of happiness. He headed towards home, trying to calm the excited butterflies in his stomach. He was more than a little nervous about his date with Bella. He wanted everything to be perfect.

Rikki was hurrying down the beach on her way to meet Zane. She kept thinking about the wonderful afternoon they'd shared together in the water. In fact, she never wanted to stop thinking about it. They'd swum all through the ocean between Mako and the coast. Rikki had shown him the coral and the reefs and she'd led him to some of the most mysterious parts of the ocean. Being able to swim with him in the ocean had been amazing. Zane had been enthusiastic about seeing

every little thing, and he pulled Rikki to him several times for long, underwater kisses. Zane had had to meet his Dad for a fast business function. He hadn't wanted to go, but he was trying to do a bit of damage control to save his and his father's relationship.

Rikki grinned as she remembered the wonderful day she'd spent with Zane in the water. She walked a little faster, anxious to see him. Rikki was almost to Zane's when she saw a familiar figure walking along the beach towards her.

"Shoot." She muttered, looking around quickly for a way to duck out of sight. The beach was open and empty, it offered no cover. Rikki ducked her head and tried to make her way up the beach and out of the path of the boy walking towards her.

"Hey Rikki." Will called from several yards away.

"Hey Will." Rikki said uneasily.

Their relationship had been more than a little bit awkward since Will had confessed his true feelings for Rikki. It had put a great deal of stress on Zane and Rikki's relationship, and Rikki and Will were still trying to find the right balance in their friendship where they didn't act awkward around each other anymore.

The pair stood in front of each other, separated only by a few feet of air.

"So..." Will began. "How have you been?"

Rikki shoved her hands in her pockets. "I've been fine." She looked at him carefully. "And you?"

"Doing better." Will had a hard time meeting Rikki's eyes directly, but he managed it.

Will had really been torn up after he'd confessed his feelings of love to Rikki. He'd felt bad, he'd acted ridiculous in front of everyone he cared about, and he had thought he would have to quit hanging out with the rest of the group over it. If Bella hadn't given him another chance he didn't think any of the group would want to be friends with him anymore.

"I'm glad to hear it." Rikki said awkwardly.

"I have to meet Zane-"

>"I'm on my way to meet Bella-"

They spoke simultaneously. Both of them paused, flushing just slightly.

"Yeah, so... I'll see you later." Rikki gave Will a small wave and then hurried along the beach towards Zane's house.

Will stood, watching her walk away. After a few seconds he turned and headed his own way towards Bella's. Was he completely over Rikki? No. It was impossible for him to just turn his feelings off. But Will knew how lucky he was to have Bella, and he did have genuine feelings for her. In fact, Will realized, he was really excited to go

on a real date with her tonight. Will made a quick stop in a nearby shop and then hurried on his way to meet Bella.

6:15 came quickly. Bella was still putting the finishing touches on her hair when the doorbell rang. She hurried to the front door and, after one more check in the mirror, pulled it open.

"'Hey." She smiled brilliantly as she looked at Will. He looked amazing in the ink black suit he had on. His tie was a delicate blue, the exact color of her eyes.

"Hey yourself." Will took his hands out from behind his back. In one hand he had a bouquet of red roses, which he held out to Bella. "For you."

"Thank you." Bella said excitedly. She put the roses in a vase of water before the pair headed out the door, ready for a night of singing, dancing, and getting to know each other all over again.

"Hey you." Zane pulled open his front door right as Rikki walked up to it. "I thought you'd never get here."

"We've only been apart for an hour and a half..." Rikki teased as she wrapped herself in Zane's arms. "You couldn't have missed me all that much."

"On the contrary." Zane guided Rikki in the house and pulled the door shut behind them. "Every moment away from you is torture..."

Rikki giggled as Zane smothered her neck with kisses. The pair clumsily made their way up the steps towards Zane's bedroom, never releasing their grip on one another. Rikki nibbled on Zane's earlobes as Zane ran his hands over her chest. Both of them were panting by the time they made it to Zane's bed. Zane gave Rikki a playful push, tossing her onto the bed flat on her back.

"Don't leave me here alone." Rikki said smoothly.

"No way." Zane jumped onto her, re-locking his lips onto hers. A slight steam rose from the pair as they rolled over each other on the king sized bed, but neither seemed to notice.

"Sit up." Rikki directed Zane, her voice raspy.

Zane obliged her, sitting up straight and waiting for further direction from Rikki. Rikki grasped Zane's shirt in her fists and pulled it roughly over Zane's head, exposing his thin but toned frame.

"Now you. Sit up." Zane said huskily. He quickly unbuttoned Rikki's top and removed it. With a quick movement of his fingers he removed her bra, exposing her breasts. "Oh god..." Zane sighed as he pulled close the girl he was in love with.

They didn't get much sleep that night.

Will walked Bella up to her front door, her hand delicately entwined in his. They had had a perfect night. Will had clapped and cheered as Bella had sung to the crowd. Afterwards Bella had been able to relax and dance with Will. They'd laughed and talked, having more fun than they'd had in a long time.

"Tonight was really great." Bella said shyly as the couple stepped onto her front stoop.

"Yeah. It was." Will gazed into Bella's blue eyes. All thoughts of Rikki had been absent from his mind ever since he had laid eyes on Bella that night. She looked amazing in her flowing black dress. Will tilted his face towards Bella's, kissing her gently on the lips. He started to kiss her more deeply, but Bella turned her face away. Will looked at Bella curiously. "What is it?"

"...I just think we should take things in steps. Slow steps." Bella took a small step away from Will as she spoke.

"Bella..." Will started, reaching for her hand.

Bella quickly opened her front door and stepped inside. "I'll call you tomorrow." She spoke quickly. "We can go get a juice or something?"

Will nodded, confused. Bella gave him one more smile before she stepped inside the house and shut the door tightly behind her.

Bella let out a long breath as she leaned her back against the cool door. She had wanted so badly to lose herself in a deep kiss with Will. Actually, she had wanted to do a whole lot more with Will. It had taken every ounce of willpower for Bella to push him away. Still, Bella breathed deeply, Will had been deeply in love with Rikki. Bella was willing to give him another chance, but she was guarding her heart carefully. She wasn't going to let herself be taken advantage of.

Still, Bella thought to herself as she wandered her way upstairs to her room. She did have feelings for Will. Strong feelings. She would take her time, see what happened. She really hoped Will could be with her without having feelings for Rikki. Only time would tell.

Zane blinked his eyes sleepily, taking in the familiar bedroom. He rolled to his side, wrapping his arm around the girl he loved so deeply.

"Hey you." Rikki practically whispered.

"You're awake?" Zane was surprised to hear her voice so early in the morning.

"A bit." Rikki murmured as she rolled to face Zane.

Zane's finger delicately traced the outline of Rikki's face. "I love you." He said quietly.

Rikki's face flushed as she smiled. "And I love you."

The pair laid there together in silence for several minutes. They didn't usually act quite so mushy with each other, but today it just

felt right.

Eventually Rikki pulled herself from the warm, comfortable bed. She couldn't make herself sleep any longer. She had gently moved Zane's arm from around her waist and had slipped from the room. Zane lay in the bed, still sound asleep.

Rikki tiptoed down the stairs towards the kitchen. She poured herself a cup of juice and settled down into the comfortable couch. She smiled to herself as she waited for Zane to wake.

Zane stumbled down the steps after a short ten minutes had passed. His eyes searched for Rikki as he came down the stairs. The settled on her and immediately relaxed as he walked to stand in front of Rikki.

"I thought you'd left." He said quietly as he curled up with Rikki on the couch.

"Not just yet." Rikki tucked her head into the crook of his neck.
"What do you have going on today?"

"I'm helping Dad out today. then headed up to the cafe to balance the books." Zane said unenthusiastically.

"You're helping your Dad again?" Rikki raised up to look at Zane.

"Yeah, he really needs the help." Zane nodded. "Plus, he's still not thrilled about me moving out. Spending some time with him will be a good thing."

"What are you helping him with?" Rikki stroked Zane's arm absently.

"He's investing in some property." Zane said. "I'm going to help him throw a lunch to impress the other investors."

"Be careful." Rikki said seriously. "If you touch water-"

"I know, Rikki." Zane said with a grin. "I'll change. I don't think I'll have a problem staying dry."

"I'm just saying," Rikki sat up, her eyebrows furrowed. "You haven't been a merman very long. It's hard to get used to everything at first. Especially at the cafe, with all of those drinks..."

Zane kissed Rikki on the forehead gently. "I'll be just fine." He said comfortingly. "I can totally handle this."

Cleo woke abruptly that morning as her phone rang next to her ear. She looked around, completely disoriented. She had fallen asleep sitting in her desk chair the night before. She was knee deep in engagement party plans and she was feeling more than a little overwhelmed. She fumbled for her ringing phone and quickly flipped it open.

"Hello?" Cleo said sleepily.

"Cleo!" Sam's voice came excitedly through the phone. "Are you

awake?"

"Only just." Cleo rubbed her eyes. "What's up?"

"I'm at the cafe." Sam spoke excitedly. "What colors do you want as a theme for your engagement party?"

"You choose." Cleo said as she stretched her arms over her head. "Whatever you pick will be fine."

"Are you sure? Ok. You'll love it!" Sam rattled on for a few more minutes before disconnecting the call.

Cleo laughed as she walked down stairs. She knew perfectly well that this engagement party was more important to Sam and her father than it was to her and Lewis. Speaking of Lewis...

"I didn't know you were here." Cleo lit up when she saw Lewis sitting at the kitchen table. "You should have called me."

"Ah, I didn't want to wake you." Lewis spared time for a quick kiss before turning back to the book in front of him.

"What's that?" Cleo gestured to the book and to the open laptop behind it.

"I'm composing a guidebook. Well, kind of a guidebook." Lewis explained.

"A guidebook?" Cleo pulled up a chair next to him. "For what?"

"Mermaids." Lewis closed the book and looked at Cleo. "I'm putting together a database of every bit of mermaid lore I can find. I'm looking through everything. Books, the internet, ancient legends... everything."

"Ok..." Cleo was still a bit confused. "But why?"

Lewis exhaled. "I just think we should take everything a bit more seriously from now on. You know, after what... happened..."

"Ahh." Cleo suddenly understood what had Lewis so distracted. "Lewis, you know what happened out at Mako with you guys wasn't your fault."

"I know that." Lewis nodded. "But things got really messy out there. I mean, Zane Bennett is a merman now. We could have all been stuck that way." Lewis swallowed hard. "I'm not going to let that happen again. We just need to be more prepared." Lewis pushed the book away from him slightly, his face relaxing into a smile. "But you're awake now. I can think on this later."

Cleo nodded, smiling. She hated for Lewis to still be so worried about things. He had been so incredibly stressed during the few days he had spent as a merman, and though he denied it, Cleo knew that Lewis felt that he should have known enough to prevent the magical mistake.

"Sam called asking about color themes for our party." Cleo said

lightly as she wrapped her arms around Lewis's neck.

"The colors could be gray and black. I don't care, as long as you're there." Lewis smiled back at her.

Cleo and Lewis spent a few minutes chatting before making plans together for the rest of the day.

"Zane, hurry up with that pitcher." Harrison fussed at his son.

"I'm coming." Zane rolled his eyes. He was being made to play the part of dutiful servant at his father's lunch. He'd been sent all over the place fetching food, plates, and whatever else Harrison decided he needed. Zane reached for the silver pitcher of iced lemonade and walked quickly over to the table.

"Zane, kindly pour a glass for Mrs. Gillies." Harrison said with a large smile.

Zane sighed before turned to pour a tall glass for the brunette lady seated at the table.

Mrs. Gillies didn't bother to look up at Zane as he finished pouring and walked to sit opposite her at the table. She stopped talking just long enough to take a long swig of her drink.

"Agghgh!" She sputtered as she spit the lemonade quickly out of her mouth. The spray splashed all over Zane. "It's scalding hot!" She reached for a glass of ice water and began chugging it down.

"Hot?" Harrison picked up the pitcher himself and almost dropped it. "It's practically boiling. Zane, what did you do to it?"

Realization hit Zane like a truck. He must have headed the pitcher inadvertently as he carried it. All of a sudden, Zane realized that he was sitting at a table with his Dad's friends, covered in lemonade.

Zane's chair fell over as he leaped to his feet. His Dad called to him, but Zane didn't hesitate as he made a mad dash into the house.

"Zane, get back here right now!" Harrison marched towards the house after him.

Zane made it through the front door and into the downstairs bathroom before the magic took him over. Zane fell to the cool tile floor, panting as he tried to catch his breath. He managed to reach around and shoved the door shut, locking it tightly. He tried to calm down as sweat ran down his forehead. That had been way too close. He couldn't believe how easy it had been to forget what would happen when he came in contact with water.

"Zane!" Harrison pounded on the door, causing it to rattle on its hinges.

"I'll be out in a minute, Dad." Zane said breathlessly as he held one hand out over his tail, beginning to dry it.

"You'll come out right now." Harrison said firmly. "What did you

think you were doing? Why did you serve hot lemonade? And run off? Zane!"

The bathroom door opened, and out stepped a very human, very panting Zane. "I'm... not feeling well." Zane marched past his father and out the back door to the luncheon group, still trying to keep his hands from shaking.

4. Awkward things

"You did what?" Rikki spoke into her phone with an anxious tone. "Are you alright? Did anyone see?"

She listened intently for a few seconds. "Ok. Meet me at the cafe when you're done."

Rikki set her phone down with a loud sigh.

"What is it?" Cleo sat down opposite her at the small booth they had been sharing inside Rikki's cafe.

"It's Zane." Rikki sighed. "He has no idea how hard it is to keep all of our secrets."

Cleo giggled. "And what happened?"

Rikki quickly reiterated Zane's story to Cleo. "He thinks he has it all under control, but he really doesn't." She said, a slight smile on her lips.

"Oh dear..." Cleo giggled slightly as she spoke. "He's going to need your help."

"I know." Rikki nodded. "We'll need to keep an eye out for him."

Cleo agreed. "He's kept our secret for a long time. We've certainly got Zane's back."

"Thank you." Rikki hugged her friend tightly.

Cleo looked at Rikki, leaning in closely. "How is he handling things?"

"I'm handling things just fine." Zane pulled up a chair at their booth and made himself comfortable.

"That was fast." Rikki playfully swatted Zane on the arm. "You almost got yourself caught today, silly."

Zane sighed. "I know, I know." He said sheepishly.

"Zane," Cleo leaned forward on her elbows. "How many times have changed by accident?"

"Oh, not that many." Zane looked at the table, avoiding everyone's eyes.

"Twelve!" Rikki giggled. "I mean, thirteen, after this last

one."

"Yeah, I know." Zane rolled his eyes. "I'm still getting used to it."

Rikki giggled. "Yesterday he was working on his motorbike and it was hot out. So, get this, he poured his water bottle over his head."

"Oh, Zane..." Cleo groaned.

"Hey guys." Excitement dripped off Bella as she joined the group at the booth. "Does anyone have a pen?"

Cleo pulled one out of her bag and slid it across the table to Bella. "What's that?" She gestured to the piece of paper in Bella's hands.

"It's an entry form." Bella said animatedly. She pulled a glossy brochure from her back pocket and placed it on the table in front of the others. "Battle of the bands. Winner gets cash and a cd recording deal."

"Bella, that's awesome!" Rikki examined the brochure. "You guys will be great. When is it?"

"Well," Bella filled in the form as she spoke. "We have to audition just to be a part of the competition. That takes place at the end of next week. If we get selected to compete the actual competition is in a month."

"That is seriously cool." Cleo grinned. "You guys are a shoo in."

"We'll see." Bella said nervously. "I just want to get our entry form turned in."

"Where's Lewis?" Zane looked around.

"He's at home." Cleo said with a sigh.

Rikki's eyes narrowed. She could tell something was bothering her friend. "Spill, Cleo. What's going on with Lewis?"

Cleo rested her forearms on the table as she confided in the group. "He's not been handling things so well lately."

"What things?" Zane frowned.

"You know," Cleo lowered her voice. "Since the whole merman thing."

"I thought he was ecstatic?" Rikki shrugged. "He's back to normal, Zane and Bella are the only two that ended up changed at all."

"That's what he feels bad about." Cleo spoke softly. "Zane, you're a merman now. And Bella, your power changed."

"But we're ok with that." Zane looked to Bella. "Aren't we?"

"Yeah." Bella said truthfully. "It's fine. Why would Lewis be too worried about it anyway?"

"He blames himself." Cleo explained. "He feels like he should have known about the whole kiss and true love thing. He is completely determined not to let anything like that happen again. He is obsessing over finding all the information about mermaid magic he can. The only problem is," Cleo rubbed her temples. "Most everything he's finding is utterly bogus. Storybook stuff. I tried to tell him that he shouldn't worry too much but he is absolutely set on learning every little thing he can."

"He shouldn't be worried about any of that." Rikki said firmly. "It wasn't his fault. Plus," She smirked. "He's got a wedding to help plan."

Cleo couldn't help but smile at the thought of marrying Lewis. "That reminds me, the engagement party is this Friday night."

"That's a little soon, don't you think?" Bella raised her eyebrows.

"That's on purpose." Zane spoke up. "The next 3 months solid are booked out, so Sam asked to go ahead and have the party this weekend."

"I know it's really short notice," Cleo turned to Bella with a hopeful look on her face. "But do you think the band could play? I'm sorry, I meant to ask you sooner but I got distracted."

"Of course." Bella grinned. "We wouldn't miss it."

"Ill-Way is ere-hay." Rikki spoke in quiet pig latin as she averted her eyes from the door. "Act normal everybody."

"Hey guys." Will walked over to the table slightly timidly.

Zane's jaw clenched. "I'll talk to you guys later." Zane stood and stalked into his office without looking at Will.

"I guess he's still mad at me." Will flushed slightly as he sat down beside Bella.

"He'll get over it, just give him some more time." Rikki spoke causally. "But I really should help him with the fruit orders for next week." Rikki smiled at the table before heading after Zane. Rikki didn't leave because she was uncomfortable around Will, though it was true that things were still a little awkward. She wanted to keep an eye on Zane. This was a juice bar. It was only a matter of time before he got himself into trouble.

Cleo smiled encouragingly at Will. "It's good to see you." She said in a chipper tone.

"Thanks." Will said unenthusiastically.

"So Cleo's engagement party is here and it's this Friday." Bella tried to get his mind off of Zane and Rikki. "The band is playing."

"And you are totally invited." Cleo added.

"Sounds good." Will perked up a bit. He looked at Bella. "Be my date?"

"Sure." Bella blushed.

Cleo smiled slightly as she watched the two of them talking. She so badly wanted them to be a real, wonderful couple again.

Cleo pushed her chair back. "I just remembered that I was supposed to... um... order Lewis a banana shake." She fibbed. "I'll see you two later." Cleo stood and walked to the counter. She had just wanted an excuse to leave the two of them alone.

Bella watched Cleo walk away before turning her attention to Will. "Hey." She said quietly.

Will reached for Bella's hand under the table and wrapped his fingers around hers. "Can I buy you a juice?"

"Sure." Bella wasn't thirsty, but she wanted to sit and relax with Will for a bit.

Will pecked Bella on the cheek before heading to the counter to order a couple drinks.

Cleo's phone rang right after she left the cafe. "Hey, I tried to call you earlier." She said.

"I know, I'm sorry." Lewis's voice came through the receiver. "I was in the-"

"Library." Cleo finished his sentence before he could. "Lewis, you've been in the library every day this week."

"I know, but they have an entire section of fantasy books." Lewis said hurriedly.

Cleo sighed. "And how many of those books are marked as fiction?"

Lewis didn't answer for several seconds.

"Where are you now?" Cleo didn't wait any longer for him to answer her question.

"I just got home." Lewis said. "I was wondering if you wanted to meet up later?"

Cleo's face broke into a bright smile. She felt like she hadn't seen her boyfriend in forever, even though she saw him briefly at least once a day. "That sounds wonderful. Want to catch a movie?"

"I was actually thinking we could go out to Mako." Lewis said distractedly.

"Mako?" Cleo furrowed her brow.

"Yeah, I want to update my temp readings out there."

Cleo took a long, deep breath. She wanted to spend time with her boyfriend, but she didn't want to talk about mermaids, mako, or anything magical.

"How about this." She began. "We go to Mako for one hour. ONLY one hour. Then we go to the movies."

Lewis took a few seconds before he answered. "...I guess that'll work. I may be able to get everything done in and hour..."

"Ok great." Cleo knew that Lewis would spend 3 or 4 hours in that moon pool if she left him to it. "When do you want to head over?"

"Ummmm.." Lewis spoke slowly. "It's 3pm now, I'll meet you in the pool at 4?"

"See you then." Cleo clicked her phone shut and slid it into her pocket. She would have to think of a different project for Lewis to get hooked on. She brainstormed the whole way home.

* * *

><p>Sorry so short! Been really busy lately, but we've got lots of exciting stuff getting ready to get going with the story! I hope you guys are enjoying this sequel! :) Loves!</p>

5. Fretting things

The next few days passed without incident and Friday came before any of them realized it. Bella, Nate, and the rest of the band practiced hard for their audition. They prepared several new songs and worked late on them every night. They were excited to practice their new work at Cleo and Lewis's engagement party that night. Will had been at every single rehearsal. He brought the band drinks and food and was a huge help to the group. Bella appreciated all of his work, but she still couldn't feel comfortable with him yet.

Rikki and Zane were hard at work in the cafe, getting it decorated for the party. They draped silk tablecloths over the cafe tables and set out delicate white candles around the room.

Zane had been unusually quiet that day, and Rikki had noticed. She had been keeping a concerned eye on her boyfriend. She worried that he was having second thoughts about being a merman. Over the past few days he had had to dash into the office several times after being accidentally splashed. He hadn't been seen by anyone, but Rikki knew he was getting a little stressed out because of the recent changes in his life.

"Are you ok?" Rikki asked Zane for maybe the tenth time.

Zane looked up from his desk. He had been tapping his pen nervously on the desk top for several minutes, but he stopped when Rikki spoke.

"It's just..." His voice trailed off as he broke eye

contact.

"What?" Rikki hated to see Zane so worried.

"Well..." Zane sighed before looking at Rikki sheepishly. "It's just, the next full moon is only a week away." Zane nervously checked his calendar as he spoke.

Realization hit Rikki like a brick. "Oh..." She suddenly got it.

The last full moon had hit while Zane, Will, and Lewis were all mermen, and it had hit them hard. Lewis had become more than a little, well, enthralled with Cleo. Will had become obsessed with telling Rikki how much he loved her (a memory that still made Zane grit his teeth.) And then Zane had been taken over with the urge to find Rikki even though she had been furious with him at the time. All three of them had been completely moonstruck and the night had almost gotten out of hand. Everything had ended up working out, thank goodness. In the end, everything had worked out without too many consequences. Zane had found Rikki and they'd shared a sweet reunion in the moon pool that night. In fact, in a way it was the full moon that had brought them back together.

Zane flushed a bit as he shook himself out of his memories of that night. He was embarrassed to have lost control of himself that night.

"Hey." Rikki wrapped an arm around Zane's waist as she knelt beside his desk chair. "It will be just fine. You will be just fine."

"Uh huh." Zane did not sound convinced. "Since I handled the full moon so well last time, right?"

"Don't be sarcastic." Rikki ran her hand up and down Zane's thigh, giving him chills. "Last time was different. We're totally ready for it now. Plus," She grinned. "Even after everything, things sure didn't end too badly for us after the last full moon, did they?"

Zane couldn't help but crack a small smile as he thought about that part of the night. He began to pace the room, once more focused on the impending moon.

"Where should we go? For the full moon?" Zane fretted. "My Dad is home, so my place is out. There would be no way I could explain to him why I've taped up all the windows. We maybe could do it here, but the full moon is on a Friday and I really don't want to close the cafe on a weekend night. Maybe we could--"

"Zane." Rikki spoke firmly, laying one finger across Zane's lips to silence his rambling. "It's going to be absolutely fine, it's not a big deal. We'll find somewhere. Just breathe."

"Ok." Zane let out a long exhale. "It's just, we only have a week. I want to make sure there are no... accidents this time."

"We could always use the boat shed..." Rikki spoke quickly. "I mean, it's small and there aren't many windows--"

"No way." Zane's tone became colder. "There is no way I'm hiding from

the moon in fishboy's boat shed. I'd rather go moonstruck."

"Ok." Rikki hadn't expected Zane to go for the idea, but it was certainly the simplest solution. "How about I ask Lewis then? Maybe we can use his house?"

Zane's face relaxed dramatically. "Yes. Lewis. Much better." He reached out and pulled Rikki in for a tight hug. "Sorry for freaking out."

Rikki kissed Zane's neck gently. "Don't worry about the moon. Nothing crazy is going to happen."

"Pick up, Lewis." Cleo muttered as she clicked her phone shut. They were to leave for their engagement party in half an hour and she couldn't seem to get in touch with her fiance.

"Still can't get a hold of him?" Don walked into the kitchen, straightening his tie.

"No." Cleo sank into a kitchen chair. She was wearing a beautifully shimmery purple dress that hung just above her knee.

"He'll turn up." Don didn't seem concerned. "Is my tie straight?"

Cleo walked over to her father and gently set his tie in a straight line. "Are you nervous?"

"Me?" Don chuckled. "My daughter is going to get married. To Lewis. Why would I be nervous?"

Cleo looked at her dad closely, trying to see if he was joking or not. She guessed it was a little bit of both.

"Ok." She smoothed her dress. "I'm going to try Lewis again."

Lewis's phone lit up on top of his bag, which lay on the sand. He was in the water of the moon pool, where he'd been for the better part of the last hour. He'd been updating all of the data he'd ever collected from the moon pool. Every measurement, every temperature, he wanted everything to be absolutely accurate.

Lewis pulled himself, dripping wet, out of the pool. He shook his head, trying to shake off the excess water as he recorded the last bit of data he'd gotten. He noticed something odd out of the corner of his eye as he knelt to pick up his thermometer. It was a sparkle of blue, glimmering from just beneath the surface of the rock wall of the cave.

Lewis sat on his knees as he examined the blue stone that lay just under the surface of the rock.

"I knew it." He said under his breath. There was more magic at the moon pool. And he needed to figure out what it was.

Bella adjusted the height of the microphone in front of her, making sure it was just the right height. The band had exactly one week to fine tune their act, so tonight was kind of like a test run for them.

The party was just getting started and the cafe was beginning to fill with family and friends.

"Did you get all of the key changes I sent you?" She pulled Nate aside.

"Of course I did." Nate said with a grin. "Want to go over them?" He put one arm around her shoulders. "In private?"

"Yuck." Bella shrugged away from him and walked over to where Will stood waiting.

"He doesn't give up, does he?" Will chuckled at Nate's attempt.

"I think I need a taser." Bella grumbled.

"Excited?" Will smoothed Bella's hair behind her shoulders.

"You betcha." Bella smiled brightly. Performing at the cafe felt like second nature to her now. It was like being at home.

"When do the guests of honor arrive?" Will scanned the cafe for Cleo and Lewis.

"Um," Bella checked her watch and frowned. "They were supposed to be here five minutes ago."

"What? Cleo and Lewis aren't here?" Rikki had just walked out of the office in time to hear Bella talk.

"We don't see them." Bella gestured to the cafe full of people.

Rikki pulled out her phone and stepped to the side to call Cleo. The phone was picked up on the third ring.

"Hello?"

"Cleo, where are you guys?" Rikki spoke above the noise of the crowd. "People are here already." Rikki looked at the entrance. "Your Dad and Sam just walked in."

"Yeah, I figured they'd get there around now." Cleo sounded far away.

"Ok, well your parents are here, but where are you?"

"I'm waiting for Lewis." Cleo sighed. "He's been out at the moon pool for hours. He was supposed to pick me up an hour ago to head over. He isn't answering his phone."

Rikki furrowed her brow. "Well that sucks. You could still come down yourself?"

"Right." Cleo's tone was bitter. "I could come to my engagement party without the guy I'm engaged to. Awesome."

Rikki felt terrible for her friend. "I'll take care of it." She said confidently. "You just be ready to come down here."

Rikki snapped her phone shut. "What is Lewis thinking?" She muttered as she quickly marched to the office in the back of the cafe.

Zane looked up as Rikki breezed in. "What's up? Has the band started?"

"No, not yet." Rikki said absently. "I have a favor to ask you."

Lewis sat on the floor of the moon pool looking at the piece of rock he'd managed to break away from the wall. It had taken a long time and a lot of muscle, but he'd managed to chip away the chunk that held the blue stone. He could see the shimmery stone, but he was afraid to try to break the blue stone out of the rock. He didn't want to break the blue gem.

A slight splash from the water in the pool caused Lewis to look up. He squinted his eyes slightly. "Zane?"

"Yeah." Zane awkwardly pulled himself, tail and all, out of the water.

Lewis hurried over to offer him a hand. He helped pull his friend the rest of the way out of the pool and sat down to watch while Zane dried himself off before speaking. "What are you doing here?"

"I've been sent to bring you to your party, slacker." Zane marched over to Lewis's materials and began tossing them into the bag.

"Hey, hey!" Lewis ran over and scooped up as much of his equipment as he could hold. "This stuff is fragile, stop tossing it."

"Yeah, well Cleo is pretty fragile too." Zane kept throwing things into the tan bag. "And if you don't get to the cafe now her Dad will probably murder you."

"The cafe?" Lewis's face was completely vacant. "Why? the party doesn't start til 7:30."

Wordlessly, Zane picked up Lewis's phone and held it in front of his face so that he could see the brightly lit time display.

Lewis's eyes flew open. "What?" He exclaimed. "How did it get to be that late?" Lewis began to pack his things quickly but carefully.

Zane stood by, watching with his hands in his pockets. "You need to get it together, man." He said conversationally. "Cleo thinks you're going loopy."

"Yeah, well I'm doing it for her." Lewis spoke hastily as he finished packing his bag and slung it over his shoulder.

"Hey." Zane stepped in front of his friend, blocking his exit. "Don't say you're doing things for Cleo when you know you're really doing them for yourself."

Lewis looked Zane up and down. It was rare for Zane to speak with him that honestly. Normally Zane would make a joke and carry on.

"Ok." Was all Lewis said.

Zane stepped aside so that Lewis could pass and followed behind him out of the cave. "I'm following you the whole way back." He said. "Rikki sent me after you and I'm not going back to the cafe empty handed."

Cleo was sitting glumly at her kitchen table when her doorbell rang. She dragged her feet over to the front door and pulled it open.

Lewis stood on the other side, dressed in a black suit and holding a bouquet of roses. "Before you say anything," He began, "Let me say... I'm sorry."

Cleo swallowed hard as she listened. She was trying really hard not to be upset with Lewis.

Lewis stepped closer towards Cleo as he spoke quietly. "My priorities have been out of wack." He said. "I promise, I'll do better. He took Cleo's hands in his. "I love you."

Cleo's mouth managed a small smile. "Ok." She said simply as she looked into the eyes of the boy she loved.

"Alright, alright." Zane called. "Enough mush, let's get this show on the road."

Lewis rolled his eyes as he led Cleo to the car Zane was waiting in, parked in the driveway. Now that was the Zane he knew best.

"Sh everyone, they're almost here!" Rikki dashed around the cafe handing out glasses of champagne. It wasn't a surprise party, but she figured why not?

The room hushed as they waited for Cleo and Lewis to walk through the entrance.

A cheer filled the room as the pair stepped slowly through the beaded doorway. Cleo glowed as she hung on Lewis's arm.

The night ended up being a huge success. Bella's band played all of their new songs to rowdy cheers. Will stood just beside the stage all night, cheering and calling out to the crowd. Whenever Bella felt butterflies in her stomach she would look offstage and feel better at the sight of him. Everything went completely perfectly that night.

Bella stepped off the stage after their last encore, wiping sweat off of her forehead. She was greeted with a tight hug from Will. He spun her around. "You were wonderful!" He laughed as he set her back on the ground.

Bella didn't even hesitate. She grabbed Will's face firmly in hers and kissed him hard. Several seconds later she released her grip. They both stood there for a moment, breathing heavily, eyes closed. Bella blushed as she pulled her eyes open to look at Will. Will's eyes opened a seconds later. They burned into Bella's. For a moment they felt like they were the only two people in the world.

Zane sat in his office later that night, after most of the crowd had headed home. Cleo and Lewis were still dancing out on the floor along with Will and Bella. Rikki was humoring Nate with one dance before he left for home.

Zane couldn't take his eyes off of the calendar on his desk. He could feel his pulse quicken as he looked at the full moon marked for one week from today.

"One week." He said to himself. The full moon was also the night of the Battle of the Bands audition.

"Everything will be fine." He exhaled, trying to convince himself.

6. Breaking things

Sorry for the slow update! Thanks for each and every review, they mean a lot!

* * *

><p>Bella, Rikki, Will, and Zane stayed late that night cleaning up the cafe after the party. Lewis and Cleo had been driven home by Don and Sam. Bella and Rikki ended up collecting the streamers and sweeping up the floor while Will and Zane took care of the heavy lifting. They moved the tables back to their usual positions one by one. Neither of them were particularly thrilled to be working together, but they weren't about to suggest that one of the girls do the harder, heavier work.</p>

"So..." Will halfheartedly made an attempt at conversation as he and Zane carried the table back to the other side of the cafe. "Great party tonight."

"I know." Was all Zane bothered to say.

"Cleo and Lewis seemed to have I good time." Will said unenthusiastically. He was determined to try one more time to talk to Zane.

"I know." Zane rolled his eyes impatiently.

Will began to get more than a little exasperated. "I'm trying here, ok?" Will said under his breath.

"Excuse me?" Zane raised is eyebrows.

Will set his end of the table down, forcing Zane to stop walking. "I'm trying to talk to you." Will crossed his arms. "You can't hold a grudge against me forever."

"Get out." Zane dropped his end of the table and turned to walk away.

"No." Will said firmly.

Zane stopped in his tracks and turned back to face him. "Excuse me?"

"I said no." Will said with conviction. "I'm not going anywhere. You won, Zane."

Zane stepped up nose to nose with will. "I won what?" He said softly.

"You won." Will raised his eyebrows and shrugged. "You won Rikki, you won the support of all of our friends. I'm not trying to compete with you anymore. I just want to be a part of the group again."

"I just want to be a part of the group again." Zane mocked Will's tone. "Grow up, Will." Zane marched through the cafe and into his office without looking back.

Will slumped down into a chair. Bella walked over to him and sat beside him without saying anything. After a few seconds she reached over and took Will's hand in hers. Will was desperately glad to have at least one person on his side.

Rikki followed Zane into the office. "What are you doing?" She stood in front of his desk with her arms crossed over her chest.

"I don't want him in here from now on." Zane said bitterly.

"Why?" Rikki shrugged. "Zane, you have got to get over all of this jealousy. Will was out of his head for a bit. He's over it now. I'm with you." Rikki leaned over, forcing Zane to make eye contact. "You have got to stop treating Will so badly."

"Like you treat him any better." Zane raised on eyebrow.

"What?" Rikki's voice rose. "I don't insult him like you do."

"Yeah but you don't feel much better around him than I do, admit it." Zane stood.

The pair stood, locked eye to eye, in silence for a few seconds. The fight faded out of Zane's face and he walked around the desk to face Rikki.

"I'm sorry." He said softly.

Rikki pulled Zane close to her and took his face in her hands. "Give Will a chance." She said quietly but firmly.

Zane gave a small nod. "Yeah, I'll try."

They ended up leaving the rest of the cleaning until the next day. The day had been plenty full already.

The next few days passed without major incident. Zane and Will ignored each other, which was a vast improvement from fighting constantly. Lewis made his best efforts to stay away from the moon pool, but he did his research late into the night every night after Cleo went to sleep. Bella and the band continue practicing. They felt that they were about as ready as they were going to get.

It was Thursday, the day before the battle of the bands audition and also the day before the full moon. Zane found himself completely

preoccupied. He couldn't stop looking up at the sky, anticipating the full moon that would rise tomorrow.

The band had just wrapped their last rehearsal before their audition. Zane walked over to Bella, who was making a few final notes to her sheet music.

"Hey, Bella." Zane got her attention.

Bella looked up, confused. "Yes?"

Zane found himself embarrassed to talk to her about this. "Um, aren't you nervous? About tomorrow?"

"Oh yes." Bella exhaled with a laugh. "I'm totally freaking out. I think we're ready though."

"Great." Zane said, relief dripping from his voice. "Where is everyone meeting?"

"Um, at the theatre, right?" Bella said distractedly as she looked to Nate. "At the theatre at noon?"

"Yup." Nate nodded as he packed his keyboard away.

"Wait..." Zane said confusedly. "Nate will be there?" All of a sudden he realized what Bella was talking about. Of course she was more worried about the band's audition than she was about the moon. She'd been a mermaid since she was 9. Zane took Bella by the arm and pulled her away from the group. "I wasn't talking about the audition, I was asking if you were worried about the" Zane lowered his voice. "Full Moon."

"The full moon?" Bella really hadn't thought much about it. "Not really."

"Oh, ok." Zane shoved his hands in his pockets. "Sorry to bother you." He turned to walk away.

"Zane, wait." Bella caught him by the arm. She didn't want to insult him. "Don't worry about it, really. The moon shouldn't affect you as much this time as it did last time."

Zane turned to face Bella. "It won't?" He asked quietly.

"No." Bella answered. "You'll be perfectly safe with Lewis." She gave Zane a reassuring smile. "No worries."

"No worries." Zane nodded thanks at Bella before walking back into his office.

The next day came all too soon. Lewis and Will had been hard at work at Lewis's house since early in the morning examining the piece of stone from the moon pool that contained the blue gem. Cleo was at work all day and Lewis had seized the opportunity to get in some research. Will was all too eager to help him. The pair were having a hard time coming up with a way to get the blue gem out of the stone. They needed the mermaids' powers to crack the stone open.

"You think we can convince Rikki or Bella to come over here?" Will

asked.

"Maybe." Lewis said vaguely. "I don't think they'll be too excited to come down here. Especially about this." He nodded toward the rock.

"Bella will help." Will said confidently. "Call her up."

"You call her." Lewis was in the middle of typing up page after page of notes. "She's your girlfriend."

Will reached for his phone and dialed the familiar number. She answered after several rings. "Hey, Bella?" Will could hear all kinds of commotion coming from her end of the line.

"Oh hey Will." Bella sounded busy. "What's up?"

"Lewis and I were wondering if you had time to stop by the boat shed today?" Will raised his voice, trying to be heard over the commotion on the other end of the line.

"Aw, Will, I'm sorry but there is no way I can make it over there today." Bella sounded genuinely regretful, though slightly put off. "We're getting everything set up for the audition."

"Oh that's right." Will had been so wrapped up in Lewis's research he had totally forgotten. "Break legs, you guys will be great! What time does it start?"

"Three." Bella said nervously. "But we have to be there at noon."

"Well you guys will be amazing, I know it. Are auditions open? Can I come watch?" Will took a few notes as he spoke.

"Um, I'm not sure." A crash came from Bella's end of the phone. "Nate! Be careful with those!" She shouted. "Listen Will, I have to go. I'll call you later."

The phone went dead in Will's hand. He clicked it shut absently. "She's headed to her audition." He told Lewis.

"Hmmm." Lewis pondered. "I have no idea how to get into this rock without using the mermaids' powers." He fretted.

"And you're _sure_ Cleo won't help?" Will asked.

"Positive." Lewis had asked her just once, and had had to immediately listen to an hour long lecture about how he had promised not to mess with Mako rocks anymore. "And Rikki won't help because Cleo won't help."

"Shoot." The boys stared at the rock in silence for several seconds, deep in thought.

"Hey Lewis." Zane said as he walked through the front door without knocking, a huge box in his hands.

"Hey Zane." Lewis didn't look away from the rock. All of a sudden Lewis's eyes widened. "Zane!" Lewis shot out of his seat and raced

over to where Zane stood. He grabbed the box out of his hands and tossed it onto the couch. "You!" He shouted as he pulled Zane in for a quick bear hug before running back to the table.

Will and Zane both stared at Lewis, bewildered expressions on their faces.

"Um, what's up?" Zane asked.

"You're a merman." Lewis said with a triumphant laugh.

Zane flushed slightly. "Keep it down, will you?" For the first time, Zane realized that Will was standing in the room. "I didn't know you were here." He said stiffly.

"I was just leaving." Will lied. He quickly collected his things and headed for the door. "I'll talk to you later, Lewis." He called behind him.

Zane avoided eye contact with Will. He was making an effort to be nicer, which is why he hadn't made a dig at him before he left. He waited for the door to shut behind Will before turning back to Lewis.
"What was with the hero's welcome?"

"You're a merman!" Lewis shouted, even more gleefully than before.

"Christ, Lewis, quit saying that." Zane hissed, looking around. "Is anyone else here?"

"Nah, gone for the weekend." Lewis shoved the rock over to Zane and looked at him expectantly. "Heat this up."

"What?" Zane's face was screwed up in confusion.

"Use your powers on it." Lewis said impatiently. He spoke a million words a minute. "There is a blue gem in that piece of stone that I found at the moon pool. We've found these stones before, they're the ones the girls wear around their necks. But the only way to get them out of the rock is to use mer-powers on it. Rikki and Cleo won't help and Bella's headed to her audition. So that leaves you." Lewis finished as he gasped in oxygen.

Zane was still trying to catch up with Lewis's racing train of thought, but he nodded. "So you want me to..." He held his hand hesitantly out over the rock.

"Yesyesyesyesyesyes." Lewis was beyond excited. This blue stone looked different from the ones the girls wore. He was anxious to see what it could do.

"Um..." Zane took a deep breath and began to close his fist. He was still a little embarrassed to use his powers in front of anyone other than Rikki. The rock slowly began to heat up, steaming slightly.

"Good job, keep going." Lewis said encouragingly.

"Ok." Zane concentrated as he tightened his fist. The rock steamed heavily, shaking just a bit.

"Yes! Go hotter." Lewis pushed.

Zane shut his eyes and focused all of his energy onto the stone in front of him. All of a sudden, the rock shattered with a loud cracking sound. Both Lewis and Zane immediately ducked under the table, covering their heads with their hands. They stayed there, frozen until the bits of broken rock had stopped falling.

"Whoa." Lewis whispered as he eyes flickered over to Zane. "How did you do that? Even when Rikki used her powers on the rock we still had to use a chisel to break it."

Zane swallowed nervously as he looked at his hands. "Let's just check it out." He said as he crawled out from under the table.

The rock had been broken into several large pieces and thousands of tiny shards. In the middle of the table lay the blue crystal. Lewis and Zane stood around it, examining it. The blue gem appeared to be a perfect circle. It was larger than the stones the girls wore, and it was completely smooth.

"Cool." Lewis reached for the stone and picked it up he turned it over in his hands, looking at it closely. He turned to face Zane and held it out to him. "It's yours." He said.

"What?" Zane took the blue gem from Lewis. "What do you mean?"

"It's yours." Lewis repeated simply. "It appeared in the moon pool after you became a merman. It's got to be meant for you. I just wonder what it does." Lewis had a slight gleam in his eyes.

"Thank you, everyone!" Bella shouted into the microphone with a huge smile across her face. The audition had gone perfectly. The judges had all seemed to enjoy the band's music, Nate had remembered the new key changes, and everyone felt content with their work. Now came the waiting. They had thirty minutes to clear the stage and then it was just an hour until the list of approved competitors was posted.

Will helped the band pack their equipment into Nate's car. He was so proud of Bella, she had done such a great job. He told her so repeatedly, and Bella enjoyed hearing it. Now they stood outside, relaxing in the sun, arms wrapped around each other.

"Hey guys!" Nate hissed out the door. "List is up!"

Bella and Will dashed inside, following Nate and the other band members into the waiting area. Crowds of people were pushed up to the wall, looking at one sheet of white paper. They waited anxiously until they could get close enough to read it. The band was silent as they searched for their name.

"We got in." Bella whispered.

The group exploded in celebration before heading back home. They only had an hour before the moon would begin to rise.

Zane paced back and forth, anxiously checking his watch. He had broken out in a cold sweat. No matter how many times the rest of the group had told him not to worry, he couldn't seem to calm down. They only had ten more minutes until the full moon was to rise.

Zane, Rikki, Lewis, and Cleo had completely sealed up Lewis's home from top to bottom. There was absolutely no way any moonlight could get in. Bella was staying with Will in his boat shed that night. She usually liked to be with the girls, but for this night she thought it would be easier on both Zane and Will if they were separated for this first one.

"Ok." Rikki looked around the room, checking the sealed windows one last time before walking towards Zane. "You're going to be fine, you have absolutely nothing to worry about."

"I know, I know." Zane said, trying not to sound as nervous as he felt. He did not like to feel out of control. Last month's episode still gave him nightmares. Zane made himself smile down at Rikki and found himself relaxing slightly. "Nothing is going to happen."
"

"Right." Rikki smiled confidently up at the boy she loved. "Piece of cake."

"Absolutely." Zane nodded. "Now, where is Lewis? I told him I'd help him examine that new blue stone he found."

"I guess he's downstairs." Rikki shrugged. She wasn't nearly as fascinated with the new stone as the boys were. Still, it was kinda cute watching Zane and Lewis play geologists.

Rikki was right, Lewis was downstairs. He had managed to convince Cleo to let him borrow her blue crystal necklace so that he could compare it to the new blue stone. The two were alike in almost every way, but they had a few distinct differences. Number one, the most obvious, was the size difference. The girls' stones were all identical in size and shape, but the new one, Zane's, was bigger and a perfectly flat circle. Also, the girls' stones were crystal clear. This new one was just the tiniest bit cloudy. Still see-through, but not as clear as the others. Lewis was dying to see what happened when the new stone touched the other crystals, but he wasn't about to try it on a full moon.

"Hey man, whatcha looking at?" Zane took a seat at the kitchen counter across from Lewis.

Lewis looked up briefly from his notes. "Hey Zane. Just reviewing the data I got earlier."

"See anything new?" Zane asked interestedly.

"Not really." Lewis closed the notebook and dropped it onto the counter. "It doesn't change on contact with water, it hasn't changed for the full moon, the only thing really left is to test it's reaction with the other crystals, but I think I'll wait to try that tomorrow."

"Good call." Zane nodded. He knew that when the girls' crystals touched they had the same properties as a full moon. He didn't know

if his would react the same way, but he was more than willing to wait to find out.

"Hey guys." Cleo hurried into the house, her arms weighed down with bags. "Sorry I'm late."

"Not late, but you're sure cutting it close." Lewis briefly checked his watch before hustling over to help Cleo with her bags. "You really should be careful."

"Lewis," Cleo's tone was condescending, "The moon hasn't bothered us in ages."

"No, but it might bother..." Lewis's voice faded as his eyes flickered over to Zane, who still sat at the counter.

"It's ok Lewis." Zane stood. "I'm worried the moon might affect me." Zane spoke directly to Cleo.

"Gotcha." Cleo began unloading her shopping bags. "Well, no worries. I'm sure it will all be fine. And I've brought distractions." Cleo looked at the rest of the group mischievously.

"Beer?" Rikki said incredulously as she walked down the steps. "Cleo, are you bonkers?"

"No, she's a saint!" Zane grabbed a can and popped it open. "Perfection." He took a long gulp.

Lewis and Rikki crossed their arms.

"Oh, come on." Cleo shrugged. "We'll all fall asleep quicker and it will help us relax."

"If you say so." Lewis let his arms drop and gave Cleo a quick peck on the cheek. He picked up a can and cracked it open. His eyebrows rose up as he looked around the sealed house. "Let's get this party started."

The night was surprisingly fun for all of them. Zane found himself quickly relaxing. He and Lewis realized that they had quite a bit in common, and soon began chattering like old friends. Cleo and Rikki enjoyed watching their boyfriends gab. Cleo eventually produced a pack of cards and the group began playing some casual drinking games to pass the time.

Three hours later, the group was nearing the end of the case of beer. They were well into their fifth round of cards, and were having an absolute blast.

"I mean it man, I totally love you right now." Lewis had one arm wrapped tightly around Zane's neck.

"No, you're like my best friend." Zane dopily draped one arm around Lewis, pulling him backwards.

"Uh oh." Cleo leaned towards Rikki. "They're going down in 3... 2..."

There was a huge crash as Zane and Lewis fell backwards off their

chairs and onto the kitchen floor. They rolled around for a few seconds giggling like kids.

"Hey Rikki!" Zane shouted. "You should come on down here, it's so comfy."

"I would kill for a bowl of Fruit Loops." Lewis murmured dumbly.

"I'm sure you would, sweetie." Cleo said as she hopped out of her chair and headed for the fridge.

"Rikki, I can't seem to be able to stand up." Zane rolled over onto his stomach before flopping down onto the floor.

"Cleo! Fruit Loops!" Lewis called towards the refrigerator.

"They're coming, they're coming." Cleo humored him as she pulled a bowl from the cabinet and quickly poured the cereal. She placed the bowl in front of Lewis a few seconds later and carefully pressed a spoon into his hand.

"Oh Cleo, you're the best girlfriend in the whole world. I mean, I love you. I can't wait til- wait, no milk?" Lewis shot Cleo a disappointed look.

"Always the charmer, Lewis." Cleo laughed as she poured some milk into her fiance's cereal bowl.

"And you." Rikki sat herself down on the floor beside Zane. "Think you might want to go on upstairs and head to bed?"

"Bed?" Zane's head shot up as he made himself sit up straight. "Yes. I am certainly ready for bed."

Rikki checked her watch. It was only just midnight, but that worked out pretty well. Zane could go to sleep and when he woke up in the morning the moon would have set. "All right then, let's get you standing."

It took a great big heave, but Cleo and Rikki managed to get Zane onto his feet.

"Are you sure you've got him?" Cleo asked concernedly as she handed Zane off to Rikki.

"Absolutely." Rikki said confidently. "We'll see you guys tomorrow morning."

Rikki and Zane began to make their way towards the hall, past the kitchen counter.

"Isn't my blue stone cool?" Zane's hand shot out and snatched the rock off the table. He held it up in the air proudly. "Lewis is going to put it in a necklace for me. Just like you."

"So he told me." Rikki tried to focus on keeping her balance as she tried to support Zane's weight. Despite her best efforts, she felt herself begin to tip sideways.

Before she could rebalance herself, Rikki found herself tumbling sideways, Zane still clutched tightly to her side. the pair fell to the floor and rolled a few times before settling.

"Are you alright?" Rikki asked Zane quickly.

Zane lay practically on top of Rikki. "I'm fine." He said, suddenly sobered.

"Thank goodness." Rikki sighed.

"I know it." Zane's sigh matched Rikki's. He let himself relax on top of her, forgetting that the blue stone was still clutched tightly in his right hand.

As Zane tried to push himself to stand up he let his hand rest momentarily on Rikki's chest, near her collar bone. Exactly where her necklace hung from her neck.

The larger stone Zane held in his hand touched Rikki's necklace just briefly, but just long enough. Zane, Rikki, and Cleo went completely and totally moonstruck as the whole house filled with a blueish glow. The three of them froze as they gazed out at the light.

"Cleo?" Lewis's head shot up from his bowl of Fruit Loops as he looked at the rest of the party. "Cleo!"

Cleo didn't move a muscle.

Lewis hastily pushed himself up to a sitting position and raced towards Zane and Rikki. He grabbed the stone out of Zane's hand and threw it clumsily to the other side of the room. The light immediately faded and the color in the room returned to normal. Zane, Rikki, and Cleo shook their heads, confused.

"What just happened?" Cleo rubbed her temples.

"Rikki touched Zane's rock." Lewis stammered, still trying to hold himself up steady. "I mean," He corrected himself. "Zane's rock touched Rikki and magic happened. NO..." Lewis's head rocked back and forth as he tried to compose himself. He took a long, deep breath. "Zane's blue stone touched Rikki's blue stone." He managed.

"And what happened then?" Cleo said seriously.

Lewis groaned slightly as he tried to put thoughts together. "The room filled with blue light and... and..."

"And what?" Rikki pushed.

"And you guys all kind of froze for a second or two." Lewis finished.

"Meaning... that we all went moonstruck." Cleo clarified, looking to Lewis for confirmation.

"Yes." Lewis said, rubbing his forehead as he spoke.

Cleo, Rikki, and Zane all exchanged nervous looks with each other.

"I feel ok, how do you feel?" Rikki looked to Zane anxiously.

"I feel... fine." Zane said, surprised. He didn't feel any different at all.

"So do I." Rikki smiled, relieved.

"Me too." Cleo grinned.

"Ok then." Rikki pulled herself carefully to stand. She extended a hand down to Zane, who still laid on the floor. "Come on, let's head up stairs."

"You got it." Zane said as he carefully stood. He looked at Lewis shakily. "Are we all alright?"

"I think so." Lewis looked at the three of them one more time.

"Everyone seems to be alright."

"I need a glass of water." Zane realized that his head was splitting from the beer. "I really need everyone to be fine, this evening was going so well."

"Here you are." In a flash, before Zane had finished speaking, Cleo poured a tall glass of water from the refrigerator and handed it to Zane.

"Thanks." Zane muttered as he downed it. He set the glass down as he looked to Rikki. "Want to go upstairs?"

"More than anything." Rikki immediately dropped Zane's hand, left the group and hurried up the steps without looking back. She quickly disappeared, closing the guest room door tightly behind her with a bang.

"Well she must be ready for bed." Zane muttered. He looked appreciatively to Lewis. "Thanks for looking after us, mate." He said awkwardly.

"No problem at all." Lewis said honestly.

"I'll see you two tomorrow." Zane headed sleepily towards the steps. "And Cleo, be sure to get some rest tonight."

"Yes, Zane." Cleo said robotically. She immediately began marching towards the stairs and up to her room.

"Cleo, wait for me!" Lewis called after her. "Give me just a second and I'll join you!"

Cleo paused only for a second. "I'm sorry Lewis, but Zane has told me to get some rest." She said in a monotone voice before continuing her way up the steps.

"So what?" Lewis called after her.

A knock at the door startled Lewis and Zane. Lewis hurried over and checked the peep hole before pulling the heavy front door open.

"Bella, what are you doing here?" He asked, confused.

"I'm fine." Bella said as she stepped inside.

"That's good..." Lewis said hesitatingly. "But why are you here?"

"Zane needed me to be fine." Bella said simply. So I came here so that he could see that I am." Bella walked confidently into the house.

Before the door could close, Will came running up to the front porch.

"Is... Bella... here...?" He panted, completely out of breath.

"Uh, yeah." Lewis held open the door so that Will could enter. "What is going on?"

"I have no idea." Will struggled to catch his breath. "All of a sudden Bella just stood up and walked out the door. She must have swam here."

The boys walked fully into the house as Lewis pulled the front door shut. Bella had walked inside and immediately sat down in front of Zane.

"What would you like me to do?" She asked him, looking up at his face.

"I don't know, whatever you want." Zane said dismissively. "It's late, you should get some sleep soon."

"Yes sir." Bella said with a smile. She immediately curled up on the floor and closed her eyes. Two seconds later she was gently snoring.

Zane walked blankly towards Lewis and Will. "I'm headed to bed." He announced. Then his eyes narrowed. "Don't you have your own home, fish boy?" He called to Will as he walked towards the steps.

"Has he been that pleasant all night?" Will asked Lewis sarcastically as he crossed his arms over his chest.

"You didn't obey him." Lewis said distractedly.

"Uh, no. Why would I obey Zane?" Will raised his shoulders.

Lewis was deep in thought. "Hey Zane," He said. "Could you ask Rikki to come back down here for just a second?"

"Um, sure." Zane shrugged. "Hey Rikki! Can you come down here right quick?"

In a flash, Rikki was downstairs and awaiting instruction. "Yes?" She said brightly.

"Tell her to make you a coffee." Lewis said to Zane quietly.

"What?" Zane raised his eyebrows. "No way, Rikki would never do that, and I'm not even thirsty."

"Just. Do. It." Lewis said seriously.

"Ok." Zane said reluctantly. "Um, Rikki? Could you make me a coffee?"

"Yes." Rikki said immediately as she hurried into the kitchen to heat water.

"Tell her never mind." Lewis said softly.

"Hey Rikki? I'm actually not craving coffee." Zane said, keeping one eye on Lewis. "I'll be up to bed in a minute, why don't you head on up?"

"You've got it." Rikki beamed at Zane before racing up the steps and into the bedroom.

Lewis was looking at Zane with his mouth hanging open. "I need to run a few more tests..." He began, still remembering Cleo and Bella's reactions. Bella still lay on the floor, sound asleep. "But Zane, it seems like the girls are all obeying you."

"No way." Zane said practically. "That's ridiculous."

"Sure it is." Lewis rolled his eyes. "But I think we need to run some more tests."

The group waited out the morning, and it was definitely a tense wait. Will, Zane, and Lewis managed to spend more than a few hours together without killing each other, but it wasn't easy. Eventually the moon began to sink behind the coast.

"Finally." Zane said, bored. "Can I wake up Rikki now?"

"Sure." Lewis said, distractedly. "Do whatever."

"Should I stay or go?" Will's gaze followed Zane. He knew he was not a welcomed guest.

"Oh just stay for now." Lewis said easily.

All of a sudden, Rikki came flying down the stairs and raced into the kitchen. She immediately began cracking eggs into a bowl while simultaneously setting the oven to 400 degrees.

"Hey Rikki, why don't you let me help you with that?" Lewis hopped down from his perch and hurried over to her.

"Zane said that I should make some breakfast." Rikki spoke blandly. "So that's what I'm doing."

"Zane said..." Lewis's voice trailed off. His gaze flickered to Will. "I'm worried."

"Worried?" Will met his eye. "We know he won't share the secret, what else is there to worry about?"

"What else does Zane wish for me to do?" Cleo came walking down the steps.

Will looked at her in surprise, but it was Lewis who spoke up.

"Zane wants you to jump on one foot and sing the Happy Birthday song." Lewis said smoothly.

"Really?" Cleo looked slightly confused but didn't hesitate. She began jumping on one leg. "Happy Birthday to you, she sang loudly."

"Make her stop!" Lewis pleaded.

"Cleo, stop it." Zane said smoothly. Two seconds later Cleo was completely back to normal, holding Lewis's hand.

"We have a lot to figure out." Lewis spoke out loud. It was beginning to look more and more like Zane had control over the girls. But that couldn't be the case, could it?

8. Important things

The hours seemed to drag on, and Lewis, Zane, and Will became increasingly more frustrated as the day continued. The girls obeyed every word that Zane said, no matter how silly it was. The three boys sat in a row on the couch, watching the three girls with unamused expressions.

"Tell Rikki to walk on her hands." Will said, bored.

"Rikki walk on your hands." Zane's tone was just as bored as Will's.

Wordlessly, Rikki flipped over into a handstand. Well, _tried_ to flip into a handstand. She tried several times, but was unsuccessful with every attempt.

"Ok, Zane, tell her to stop." Lewis said in a monotone voice. "We don't want her to hurt herself."

"Rikki stop." Zane said unenthusiastically.

Rikki stopped immediately and took a seat on the armchair.

The boys sighed collectively. Cleo and Bella were sitting on the floor, absently staring out the window. All three of the mermaids obeyed every word Zane said.

Lewis leaned forward, his face buried in his hands. He _knew_ there was something up with that new blue stone. He should have put it somewhere where no one could get ahold of it. But what in the world was going on now? Lewis checked his watch. It was only just 8am, still really early. Lewis stifled a yawn as he stretched his arms over his head.

"What now?" Zane asked.

"Be careful what you say, Zane." Lewis answered quickly. "This could be a very dangerous thing."

"What could be a dangerous thing?" A voice asked sleepily.

All three boys' heads shot toward the sound. Cleo blinked back at them blankly, rubbing sleep out of her eyes.

"Cleo?" Lewis stood and walked over to her quickly.

"Yes?" Cleo waited for him to speak. "Lewis?"

Lewis looked at his fiance closely. The odd moonstruck look had faded from her eyes. "Zane quick, tell her to do something. Something _easy._"

"Uh, Cleo..." Zane thought for a second. "Stand up and do 10 jumping jacks."

Cleo stood, and each of the boys drew their breath in sharply. But Cleo simply walked into the kitchen. "Do them yourself." She called behind her as she pulled open the refrigerator.

Lewis, Will, and Zane's eyes flew open excitedly. "Yes!" They shouted.

"What are you three going on about?" A tired Bella stood up from her place on the floor. She looked around herself, quickly becoming confused. "Will? What are we doing here?"

"Bella..." Will wrapped her in a tight hug.

"When did you two get here?" Rikki stood and quickly located Zane. "What is going on?"

"It wore off. _It wore off!_" Lewis pulled Cleo in for a bone-crushing hug.

"What wore off?" Cleo said, slightly louder.

"Ok." Lewis went immediately into scientist mode. "Everyone have a seat."

The group obeyed. Will and Zane held tightly onto their girlfriends. Zane's heart was beating super fast. If everything from the full moon had worn off then that hadn't been such a bad night.

"Talk, Lewis." Rikki said insistently.

Lewis nodded several times before he opened his mouth. "Last night Zane's new blue stone touched the blue stone in Rikki's necklace." He spoke quickly. "And right when it did, the room went all blue, you know, the way it does when your necklaces touch. Everyone was moonstruck for a bit, and then when you all came to you were... well... you were obeying Zane."

"Huh?" Rikki said skeptically. "We did what?"

"You did everything he told you to." Will chimed in.

"Whoa whoa whoa." Cleo stood. "Meaning _what_ exactly."

"Nothing bad!" Lewis comforted her quickly. "Just little

things."

"So... Zane would say to do something and we just did it? Automatically?" Bella asked skeptically.

"Like zombies." Zane muttered.

"Ew." Cleo sank back down onto the couch.

"Test it again." Lewis said to Zane excitedly. "Tell them to do something else."

All three girls crossed their arms over their chests.

"Rikki, make me a coffee." Zane said, a teasing grin on his face.

"Heck no, make your own darn coffee." Rikki teased back.

"She's definitely back." Zane said with a smile, pulling Rikki's face to his for a kiss. He hadn't liked the obedient, moon struck Rikki from last night. He liked the spunky, independent blonde he had fallen in love with years ago.

"Ok. Whatever happened last night seems to have worn off." Lewis spoke up. "However," He looked to Zane. "You should still be careful about what you say to the girls, just in case."

"I'm not going to tell them to jump off a bridge or anything, stop worrying." Zane said smartly.

"No, it's not just that kind of thing." Will realized. "What if you ask them to go somewhere for you and it starts raining before they get there? They'd keep obeying you and end up exposed. Or what if you tell them off offhandedly to try something and it hurts them or isn't good for them." Will paced, deep in thought. "Zane, even an innocent comment could seriously hurt them. You've got to be careful."

"Then it's a good thing I know how to control myself, isn't it?" Zane stood and faced Will nose to nose.

"Hey guys, cool it." Bella stood and pushed the two boys gently apart. "All that matters is that whatever happened last night seems to be over with. Let's just get on with our day."

Will stepped back reluctantly. He hoped Zane realized how bad things could get if the girls really did start obeying everything he said again. The slightest slip of the tongue could get the girls into a lot of trouble.

"Bella's right." Rikki agreed. "It's over now, let's just carry on."

"Ok," Lewis conceded, "But I may run some tests later today."

"Tests?" Cleo chuckled. "What kind of tests are you going to run on us, Lewis?"

"I'm... going to..." Lewis didn't really know. "Run tests. Don't

worry about it."

"Ok." Zane checked his watch. "Well you guys can do whatever you want, but I have a cafe that needs opening."

"That's my cue as well." Rikki stood to follow him. She turned back to the group momentarily. "And I'm following him because we're working the same shifts. Not because I'm under a moon spell." She followed Zane through the front door. It clicked shut behind them.

Only a few seconds of silence echoed through the room before Bella spoke up. She had a puzzled expression on her face, her brows knitted tightly together. "Lewis," She began. "I get that we obeyed Zane, but how did that affect me?" She looked to Will. "We weren't even in the same house? We were streets away."

"Yeah, you were." Lewis thought hard to the night before. "Zane had said something that you were answering to." Lewis racked his brain. "He said..." His eyes lit up. "I've got it. He said that he really needed everyone to be ok. And then 5 minutes later you showed up at the door babbling about how you were doing just fine."

"But I didn't hear him, did I?" Bella asked.

"No, you didn't." Lewis shook his head. "You just showed up at the door. Will was running to keep up."

"And we're certain it's over, right?" Will took Bella's hand in his.

"It sure seems that way." Lewis shrugged. "The girls are acting normal again, it must have worn away."

"Great." Cleo stood. "Lewis, we really need to go ahead and get ready, we're supposed to be looking at wedding locations with Sam today."

"Right." Lewis said unenthusiastically. He knew exactly where he wanted to get married to Cleo, and she agreed with him. However, Cleo felt like she owed it to Sam to let her take them out location hunting. All Lewis wanted was a tiny ceremony out on Mako Island in the moon pool. Cleo had reservations about having the ceremony out there, in their secret cave, but she agreed that it would be somewhat fitting to get married in a place that had such significance for them.

"I told her we'd be ready to go at 9:30, we'd better hurry." Cleo began to gather her things quickly.

"Right behind you." Lewis hurried upstairs to change clothes.

Bella and Will found themselves alone sitting on the couch. "I'd better get going too." Bella stood, smoothing her sundress. "Since we got into the competition we've got a whole lot of work to do. The band is going to have to practice daily now."

"That's right." Will had forgotten all about the auditions yesterday. "You guys must be really excited."

"Oh we are." Bella said enthusiastically. "We have a lot of ideas. Well, I have a lot of ideas." She looked around. "Did I bring anything over here with me? My bag?"

"Not a thing." Will shrugged. "Do you need to get to band practice? I can run home and bring your things by the cafe right quick."

"Would you?" Bella asked appreciatively. "That would really be a huge help. I wanted to practice a few things before the rest of the group arrives."

"Not a problem." Will said warmly. "Go ahead, I'll be down there in just a bit."

Bella hurried out the door. Will could still hear Cleo and Lewis upstairs getting ready, but for the moment he was alone in the room. Will sat back on the couch. He didn't want to just take off, he figured he'd wait and leave when Lewis and Cleo did. He sat down heavily on the couch and leaned back, his hands resting on the back of his head. He leaned back into the couch, trying not to get too sleepy. It had been an awfully long night. His head rolled to one side.

Something blue and glimmering in the corner of the room caught his eye. It was the new stone. The one that had caused so much trouble last night.

Will stood automatically and walked over to the stone. He picked it up in one hand and examined it closely. It looked harmless now. Will peered up the staircase quickly, making sure no one was coming. Then he quickly slipped the stone into his pocket and slipped out the front door and back towards his boat shed. He didn't want Lewis to test anything else, it was too easy for something to go wrong. Will felt guilty for stealing the stone, but he cared too much for Bella's safety to worry about it for long.

Lewis and Cleo clattered down the steps a few minutes later. They carried all of the wedding planning materials am had procured for them. The kit consisted of a never ending number of pictures, brochures, maps, menus, and color palates. Lewis set the heavy bag on the counter and began to lace up his shoes so they could go.

"You know," Lewis said as he tied. "Most people plan their weddings according to what they want."

"True." Cleo agreed. "But most couples plan their weddings together. You've been so busy studying the moon pool you've hardly been around."

"Fair enough." Lewis nodded.

Cleo put one arm around Lewis's shoulders. "I'm not fussing." She said gently. "But I'd kinda hoped you'd be getting tired of the experiments by now. And now we have a whole new thing to take your time away from me." She pecked him quickly on the lips before continuing. "Don't get too carried away, k?"

"I promise." Lewis said with a smile. "At least, I promise to try." He said, not as confidently as Cleo would have liked.

"Fair enough." Cleo echoed his earlier words. A car honked outside.
"That's Sam!"

Lewis pulled the heavy bag back into his arms. He mentally resolved to become a bigger voice in the wedding plans. All he wanted was a small ceremony with their closest friends and family. From what he'd heard, Sam was planning the next royal wedding. Lewis tried to focus completely on the wedding, but the blue stone stayed present in the back of his mind.

The day passed uneventfully. Rikki and Zane worked hard in the cafe all day. Bella was there most of the day, but the band had eventually ended rehearsal around 5.

"Is that everything?" Rikki looked around the small eatery. The chairs had all been put up, the floor had been mopped, the register had been balanced, and she and Zane had that tired, end of the day feeling.

"I think so." Zane heard the clock chime behind the bar. It was midnight already. "I can't believe we've been here all day. We may need to hire some new help."

"May?" Rikki laughed wearily. "Zane, we worked morning to night. Actually, morning to morning. We definitely need to hire some help."

"I just need to lock up the office." Zane squeezed Rikki's hand briefly before heading back towards the office. "Then we can stop and get something to eat."

"What do you want to stop for?" Rikki called from the front entrance.

"I want you to get whatever you want." Zane called back as he locked the office door behind him.

"Ok." Rikki said simply.

Zane fiddled with the keys, locating the one that locked the front door. "What did you have in mind?" He asked as he walked.

There was no answer. Zane stopped walking and looked up sharply. "Rikki?"

She was gone. The front door hung open, swaying in the breeze.

9. Messing things

"Rikki!" Zane dashed through the front door, looking left and right for the familiar blonde head. He couldn't see her anywhere. "Rikki!" Zane shouted as he ran down the street, unsure where to go next. He ran his hands frantically through his hair as he looked around wildly, not seeing a trace of Rikki. With shaking hands Zane pulled his phone from his pocket and dialed.

"Lewis!" He shouted. "Keep an eye on Cleo and Bella. Something's wrong with Rikki. Call me immediately if you hear from her."

Zane ran off into the night, calling out for Rikki but not getting an answer in return.

Lewis set the phone carefully on the counter before turning to look at Cleo, who watched him with curious eyes.

"What is it?" She asked.

"Ah, Cleo..." Lewis examined her carefully, but she looked normal. For now, anyway. "It seems Rikki's run off."

"Run off?" Cleo's brow furrowed. "To where?"

"Well, we aren't exactly sure." Lewis continued uneasily. "But it seems Zane may have accidentally told her to do something and..."

"Oh no..." Realization hit Cleo like a ton of bricks. She looked around nervously. "Am I still normal?"

"You seem to be." Lewis was still watching her. "But I really don't know how this all works, Cleo, we need to be really careful."

"We need to call Bella and warn her and Will." Cleo dialed quickly. A few seconds later after a brief conversation she set the phone back down on the counter. "They're going to stay locked up in the boatshed tonight." She reported.

"Good, that's the best place for them to be." Lewis agreed. He kept a wary eye on Cleo, but she seemed to still be herself.

"What is Zane doing now?" Cleo wrung her fingers as she paced back and forth.

"Looking for Rikki" was all Lewis could answer. He didn't know exactly what Zane had told Rikki to do, he just knew that Rikki was gone, on Zane's orders. Lewis took Cleo's hands in his reassuringly. "Don't worry." He spoke calmly, even if it was a fake calm.

"Rikki!" Zane's throat was raw from shouting. He had no earthly idea where she had gone. He kicked himself hard for what had to be the tenth time. "I want you to HAVE/GET whatever you want." He muttered. "Zane you idiot." He knew that had to have been what Rikki obeyed. He had been so careful all day, only letting his guard down at the end of the night of work.

Zane shoved his hands in his pockets, lost as to where to look next. Then he had an idea. He looked around at all of the people milling around. This was going to draw a lot of attention to himself, but it was worth trying.

"Rikki Chadwick I order you to come here!" He shouted at the top of his lungs. Several curious sets of eyes turned to look at him but he paid them no attention. "Rikki! Come to me now!"

Zane looked around wildly but didn't see a blonde head hurrying towards him. If Rikki were really under his control once again she would come running, wouldn't she? That is, if she could hear him. But Bella had obeyed him last night, even though she couldn't hear him, right? Zane didn't care, he just wanted Rikki to be safe and sound.

With him, preferably.

Zane called out to her again, ignoring the curious looks he attracted. He walked through the streets quickly, calling out as far as he could. He walked far, until he reached streets he was unfamiliar with. He stood still for just a second, looking around him.

An idea struck him suddenly. Eyes lighting up, Zane spun on his heel and took off for the pier. He jumped into his boat. His hands shook so badly it took three tries to get it started, but eventually it roared to life. Zane powered it out into the open seas, headed in the direction of Mako. Once he got out about half way he cut off the engine and looked around him, not that he could see anything in the pitch black water.

"R—" Zane started to shout, then rethought it. What if someone heard him calling for her? Zane lowered his voice. "Rikki?" He called out lightly. "I want you to come here now." Zane waited a few seconds, but all he heard was the lapping of the waves against the side of his boat. He pulled out a paddle and began rowing the tiny boat through the waves, calling for Rikki every few seconds. Luckily this was a calm night. Ordinarily it would have made Zane nervous to be this far out in the ocean in his tiny boat at night.

"Any word?" Bella spoke into her phone nervously.

"Not yet." Cleo answered. "But I'll let you know if we hear from her."

"Ok." Bella bit her bottom lip. Will squeezed her hand reassuringly.
"Be careful."

"Same to you." Cleo answered.

The line went dead in Bella's hand. She snapped it shut and set it on the arm of the couch with a sigh. "Nothing."

"I didn't figure." Will was worried for Rikki. As much as he felt he was over her he still had feeling for her that he hadn't been able to stomp he truly believed his heart now belonged to Bella, there was a part of him that would love to run outside and join in the search for Rikki.

Bella noted the sullenness in Will's tone. She, too, had yet to completely get over Will's feelings for Rikki. No matter how many times she told herself that he was over her she knew it wasn't quite all the way true. Bella tightened her fingers around Will's. She could tell he was worried about Rikki, but she appreciated the fact that he was there with her that night.

"Rikki!" Zane shouted, not caring who heard him anymore. "If you can hear me I demand you come here right now!" Exhausted, Zane sank down into his boat, crossing his arms around himself tightly. He was exhausted, his throat was on fire, and he was cold. Beyond all of that, he was worried about where Rikki had ended up. He was just getting ready to give up and set the engine back toward the shore when he heard the unmistakeable sounds of a swimmer all the way out there in the ocean. Zane's eyes flew open. He immediately scanned the water, looking for that familiar blonde head of hair. "Rikki?" He

said hopefully.

"I'm right here." Rikki's head popped out of the water. She had a huge grin on her face and an enormous crab clutched tightly to her chest. "I came as soon as I heard you calling."

Relief flowed through Zane as he looked into her adoring eyes. "Oh... my god." He panted. "You have no idea how worried I've been about you."

"Worried about me?" Rikki looked genuinely flummoxed. "Why in the world would you be worried about me?"

"You ran off!" Zane's voice was slightly higher pitched than usual. "I had no idea where you'd gone."

"I went right where you told me to go." Rikki held the crab up slightly. "You told me to have whatever I wanted." She blinked a few times. "I wanted some fresh crab meat." Rikki's tone was matter of fact. Her face fell slightly. "Did I do something wrong?"

Zane reached one hand down and cupped Rikki's chin. A million different thoughts were racing through his head, namely how lucky he'd gotten. What if Rikki had craved dolphin and jumped straight in the tank at the water park? What if she'd followed what she'd wanted through a sprinkler out in public? Zane shuddered slightly, thinking about all of the possibilities. He smiled down at Rikki, who still had a dopey look on her face.

"Of course you didn't." Zane said gently. "Now I want you to go straight to Lewis's house and wait for me to get there. Rikki," Zane looked her dead in the eyes. "Don't go anywhere else. Oh, and be sure not to be seen." He added for good measure.

"Whatever you say." Rikki murmured. She immediately flipped her tail and took off for the shore. Zane exhaled the longest sigh of relief he'd ever taken. That was way too close.

The next morning came too slowly, but it came eventually. Rikki had done exactly as Zane had said, though Zane was quickly learning how specific his orders needed to be. When Zane ran up the front steps to Lewis's front porch he found Rikki sitting calmly on the front mat.

"Why didn't you go inside?" He had asked her.

"You told me to go to Lewis's house." Rikki had answered blankly.

Once inside, Zane had told Rikki to go to sleep in Lewis's guest room and stay there, and that is exactly what she'd done. Zane had wanted to join her, but he was too worried that he might say something that could be interpreted as a command, so he had slept downstairs on the couch.

Cleo woke up the next morning and stretched one arm up over her head. Lewis lay beside her, flat on his back, his arms flung over his head. His snoring had woken her up, she realized. Once she had listened for a moment she didn't know how she'd gotten any sleep at all next to the noise.

"Lewis.." Cleo cooed gently in his ear. He snorted a bit, but didn't wake.

Cleo tried again. "Lewis..." She said a little bit louder. He didn't move a muscle.

Cleo cleared her throat. "Lewis!" She practically shouted.

Lewis jerked awake with a start. He sat up immediately, looking around, confused. "Wha-" He said sleepily.

"Wake up, sleepy." Cleo said impatiently. "We made it through the night. I need you to untie me."

Lewis blinked, confused by the request. Then the events of the previous night came rushing back to him. Lewis had been nervous with Zane staying in the house. He was afraid that Zane would say something else and Cleo would turn into an obedient robot once again. Lewis's solution was to tie Cleo's wrist to the bed frame before the two of them had fallen asleep. That way she couldn't go anywhere, even if Zane commanded it. The plan had worked, though it looked like it had been unnecessary.

The pair walked down the steps together. Zane was already awake, sitting anxiously on the couch. He stood quickly when he saw Cleo and Lewis.

"She-" Zane started to speak but Lewis quickly motioned for him to stop.

"No offense, but don't say anything, k?" Lewis pleaded.

Zane shut his mouth.

End
file.